

# UPI wins okay from Peking to cover diplomatic event

The visit of the United Press International team to the People's Republic of China recently nailed down one more significant concession that goes a step beyond the formal exchange of news between the major U.S. wire services and China's official agency.

Responding slowly but affirmatively to entreaties by UPI president Roderick W. Beaton, the top echelon of officials in Peking authorized the entry of American newsmen, on special visas, to report the upcoming talks between Premier Chou En-Lai and Japan's Premier Kakuei Tanaka which are expected to lead to improved Sino-Japanese relations.

Beaton told E&P he had broached the idea of having UPI reporters cover the historic meeting, scheduled early next month, while paying a call at the Department of Information in the Foreign Ministry. His arguments for American-style reporting of the event were weighed amicably and he was asked to present them formally in a letter.

## By letter and cable

This he did while the UPI party was enroute to Hong Kong and Beaton renewed the petition by cable from Tokyo. On his return to UPI headquarters in New York City, there was a message of acceptance from Peking with a notation that he should forward at once the biographies and passport information for the men assigned.

Beaton and UPI editor H. L. Stevenson designated Charles R. Smith, Hong Kong bureau manager since 1963, a veteran Far East reporter and editor; and a Pulitzer Prize photographer, David H. Kennerly, who has been in Vietnam the past two years.

The UPI team went to China, by invitation, to negotiate an agreement for a news-and-picture exchange with Hsinhua (New China News Agency), just as an Associated Press team had done a few weeks earlier (E&P, August 19). The arrangement, Beaton said, was formalized with an exchange of identical letters, each bearing one signature of each party. The Chinese, he explained, are less formal than Americans when it comes to contracts, especially since there is no diplomatic relationship between the two countries.

## 'Hard news' spotters

Under the agreement, UPI will receive Hsinhua's full news report, via radio to Hong Kong and Japan, and a selection of pictures, some via radio, and others in a package. The latter will include color photos. Beaton remarked on the exquisite color in Hsinhua prints and welcomed the opportunity to service them to UPI clients around the world.

Chinese-speaking writers in the UPI offices abroad will distill any "hard news" they find in the Hsinhua dispatches which conform with the rhetoric and propaganda

of Chairman Mao's regime. Hsinhua, in turn, already is spreading many AP and UPI items right off the wire to its clients—all of the newspapers of China—and in its special news bulletins.

In a conversation with Premier Chou, which later was tagged "off the record," Beaton said he and his associates gained a strong impression that Peking would be favorable to relaxing news restrictions for U.S. press services. Special requests for coverage of significant events might be granted in the absence of diplomatic recognition of Red China. That problem is bound up in the complexities of U.S. recognition of Taiwan.

## A matter of 'mainland' style

The UPI group was advised on several occasions that Hsinhua's style allows for identifying the People's Republic of China as China's mainland, not Mainland China, as in U.S. press dispatches. Beaton said he replied that UPI would adhere to its own style to avoid confusion in readers' minds. The term Nationalist China is taboo with Hsinhua.

The Chou conversation occurred while the official delegation awaited the arrival of Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia, who lives in resplendent style in Peking. Beaton later had a long interview with the exiled leader who spoke in French-accented English.

Beaton said he was hopeful, after gaining the special dispensation for the Tanaka story, that Peking would open up regular coverage by U.S. correspondents on the same rotation basis as Japan's Kyoto service does. This allows one reporter to work in Peking for a specified period, to be followed by another and another, so there is no appearance of a "permanent" bureau.

## How Hsinhua operates

From his sheets of notes on the 19-day trip, Beaton drew this picture of Hsinhua:

It is state-owned and it disseminates opinion in accord with Maoism. Its principal editors are members of the revolutionary government at the highest level.

Hsinhua makes no apology for its slanted writing, since, they say, "there is no such thing as true objectivity." Thus, Beaton observed, the Hsinhua reporters are masters of advocacy journalism.

There are 1,900 people in Hsinhua operations; 1,300 of them in Peking, 400 in provincial bureaus, 30 in major city bureaus, 200 outside China, 300 in the photo section which has its own production headquarters in a five-story building. Beaton observed there some U.S.-made Omega enlargers at least 10 years old and some archaic German and Japanese camera equipment. Leica and Rolleiflex cameras have only one lens.

The major bureaus outside China are at Geneva, London, Paris, Hong Kong and the UN Mission in New York. Leased

satellite transmission facilities are used.

All foreign services are monitored and Hsinhua helps itself to any news and pictures, just as U.S. news agencies have done. Beaton heard one complaint. Hsinhua hadn't been able to pick up any UPI picture transmissions lately. It was during the period the UPI was changing its system of transmission.

## Writers are specialists

In its bureaus Hsinhua has editor-writers who specialize in politics, sports, farming and industry, and cultural events. They work eight hours, six days a week. However, Hsinhua's main office operates around-the-clock because all of the final preparation of copy is done there. There is no direct feed of news from the bureaus to clients.

News copy goes via facsimile in vertical strips, at a rather slow speed of 7,000 characters per hour. Most newspapers are only four pages and have no ads other than small directory items for special events.

Beaton was amused by the reply he got when he asked a local newspaper editor what he thought of the Hsinhua service. He said, "copy is too wordy, there are too many errors, and it's usually too late, but the price is right—it's all free."

## At the Literary Gazette

Beaton also filled a notebook with jottings after visiting the office of the *Literary Gazette*. It was founded in 1938 with about 3,000 circulation and now has 900,000. Its only competitor, in a sense, is the *Daily Worker* with 600,000 which appeals largely to the "working classes."

The Gazette, which led the cultural revolution, is run by a committee of 11 elected by the staff. The No. 1 man, who has held the job for 20 years, is called "the leading member" and his colleagues include a commentary editor and a theoretical propaganda editor. What they write appears, in artistic format, on a broadsheet of crude newsprint which runs through seven antiquated rotary presses at the rate of about 9,000 papers an hour. The press start is "between 8 and 10 a.m.," depending on when Hsinhua gives the word.

At the Shanghai Trade Fair, Beaton noticed a "new" press capable of 18,000 papers per hour. He said the Gazette people appeared to be unfamiliar with offset presses for newspapers and welcomed his offer to send some articles about them.

## The 'barefoot' squad

Three out of five of the editors are university graduates and about one-fifth of the staff are women. Large numbers of young people are trained for newspaper work by being sent to communes where they are "educated" by the peasants.

This system of "barefoot boys" was devised to "correct" the dignified status of journalists on the theory that intellectuals need hard work in order to really under-

stand life-style. The 120 or so editorial workers on the Gazette earn 70 yuan a month, or about \$31.50 (U.S.) and 170 in the back shop and 100 in supporting services—there is no advertising, circulation, marketing or promotion department—receive from 60 to 130 yuan a month.

The Post Office handles all newspaper circulation and doesn't bother to keep exact statistics,

#### Proficient in English

Beaton told how he topped off his visit to Shanghai by interviewing a 14-year-old boy who, it turned out, was studying English (his "favorite subject"). Asked through an interpreter to say something in English, the lad proclaimed, "Long live Chairman Mao!"

UPI photo labs have been busy processing thousands of pictures taken by Robert Schnitzlein and several picture stories on China may result, Beaton said. Also on the tour were Mrs. Beaton, an educator herself, who observed classes in numerous schools; and foreign editor Wilbur G. Landrey and Mrs. Landrey.